



c.44.6: Magdalene Street

1900 06 14

An inquest on a boy of eight, killed by a bus on Castle Hill, affirmed the death was accidental. It is hardly an exaggeration to describe Chesterton Corner as the death trap of Cambridge. Four road meet; they are all narrow, and the configuration of the corner is such that it is quite impossible for the driver of a vehicle up Magdalene Street to have the faintest notion that there is another coming along Chesterton Lane and if the two do not crash into each other it will be more of an accident than if they do. More room is needed at the corner. This would involve pulling down some old houses. The matter is one which the authorities ought to give attention at once.

1910

1911 08 11

Street widening Magdalene Street, Sidney St etc – 11 08 11b

1920

1922 10 09

There were exciting scenes at the Pickerel Yard, Magdalene Street after a loud explosion was heard in the harness-room. Fred Silk had been cleaning his motor bicycle and in filling the tank had spilt petrol. He then lit the acetylene lamp and threw the match down. Immediately flames sprang from the floor and the petrol tank exploded. His arm was rather badly burned and bicycle left in a fearful state, though not damaged beyond repair: about half the back tyre was burned completely away. The fire was put out by Thomas Frohock, a porter at Magdalene College, using a Minimax patent extinguisher. CWN 09 10 22

1926 01 02

One has been glad to see the new sign posts erected in various parts of Cambridge for in these days of ever-increasing road traffic we want to make it as easy as possible for motorists who pass through our town. As originally erected one directed travellers to Bedford along King's Parade and through Magdalene Street, but when it was pointed out that the traffic through the town should be diminished as much as possible, this offending arm was removed.

1926 11 04

No little excitement was caused when an undergraduate, fully-clothed and wearing cap and gown, jumped off the Magdalene Bridge into the river, using an umbrella as a parachute. A film record of the exploit was taken by Lord Burghley, the famous athlete, who had his baby film camera mounted on the top of his motor car. The undergraduate, being hard up, had hit on this idea as a way of getting money and has netted enough to keep him for a week or two in pocket-money

1927 02 01

The Cambridge Borough Surveyor reported that he had asked the authorities of St John's College if they would consent to the fence between the spinney and footpath leading to the bridge at Burrell's Walk being set back. The Bursar said they were prepared to give up the spinney, containing 1,225 square yards, for the use of the public. It was resolved to accept the offer with thanks and that the land should be placed in charge of the Commons Committee. Magdalene College are prepared to set back and re-erect the old wall in Magdalene Street on condition the Corporation would contribute £160 towards the cost. Coun King drew attention to the desirability of pedestrians being directed to keep on the left of the pavement, but no action appears to have been taken

1927 07 07

The Conservators of the River Cam considered a scheme to make the river navigable for cargo boats up to the Quayside near Magdalene Bridge. Mr Banham had recently bought a vessel for conveying cargo and at present it can only come as far as Jesus Lock. There had been no traffic for years and the state of the river was very bad. There was a possibility that the river could be dredged but the Commons Committee had taken a lot of trouble to make Jesus Green a beauty spot and would not sanction the deposit being placed on the Common.

1927 09 19

Three pianos were badly damaged by an outbreak of fire in a warehouse behind shop premises opposite the Porter's Lodge in Magdalene Street, Cambridge and it was only through prompt action that a considerable amount of the old property in the district was not destroyed. An oil stove was kept alight in the warehouse used by Mr W.J. Moore, music dealer, to prevent the instruments from becoming damp and in some way this was responsible for the outbreak.

1928 03 03

Magdalene College hopes that a start will soon be made on the building of a new court on the opposite side of the Street. Plans have been drawn up for a three-sided brick court open to the river, traditional in style. The flank parallel with Magdalene Street will not interfere with the existing shops, but the thoroughfare is long overdue for widening and from the remodelled bridge there would then be a noble prospect of the new court with a lawn or gravel forecourt separated from the pavement by a low parapet.

1928 06 17 c

Sir – the residents in Bridge Street and Magdalene Street, Cambridge, have just passed through a hectic week of sleepless nights, caused by the traffic and University men returning from balls etc all hours of the night, and just when we expect to get a little quiet and rest after May Week the Corporation start their offensive. If the street must be paved in a week why not let the men work from 7 am till 10.30 pm instead of dragging them out of their beds at 3 am and keeping other people awake as well? Why all the hustle. Is it to save the buses making a wider detour? – Harry Langdon

1930

1930 03 31

Perhaps fired by childhood memories of Blondin, the famous tightrope walker, a young man attempted the perilous crossing of the River Cam in the wee small hours of the morning. Unfortunately his skill and possibly his sobriety were not equal to his enthusiasm. He first demonstrated his agility by climbing the lamp-post at the end of the bridge then wandered three paces along the parapet of Magdalene Bridge before sliding gracefully into the watery depths beneath. Although able to swim he was exhausted by the time he reached Quayside and it took the combined efforts of his companions and a policeman to get him out, wetter but slightly more sober. 30 03 31

1930 09 03

Another example of the ‘new Cambridge’ in the making is the extensive site on which Magdalene College intends erecting an imposing new wing. It is at the rear of the Pickerel and Cross Keys yards originally occupied by Bird’s vinegar and mustard factory. Mallory Court will provide the principal access but eventually a complete transformation will be effected by the demolition of all the property between the bridge and Northampton Street making Magdalene Street a broad and handsome thoroughfare. 30 09 03c

1932 04 13

Large new buildings designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens are part of a comprehensive extension scheme by Magdalene College on land originally occupied by Bird’s vinegar and mustard factory. For two years it has been one of Cambridge’s biggest building contracts but the comparative obscurity of the site has kept it out of the public eye. Eventually the whole of the west side of Magdalene Street from the bridge to Northampton Street will be cleared for reconstruction with a more imposing bridge and a further college wing at right angles to the present one. 32 04 13

1940

1948 06 01

Today the one-way traffic system designed to relieve congestion in the centre of Cambridge came into operation. In Sidney Street and Bridge Street the traffic will flow in a northerly direction towards Magdalene Street from the town centre, while in St John’s Street and Trinity Street it will flow in a southerly direction towards King’s Parade. In Green Street traffic will flow in one direction from Gifford Place to Trinity Street - and the remainder of Green Street will be open for two-way traffic. This extension of “one-way” traffic will link up with the system now in operation at St Mary’s street, Market Hill (north side) and Market Street

1949 03 11

A driver told the court that when driving his lorry along Magdalene street, Cambridge he had to slow down to a crawl because of the other traffic, when he heard a chattering noise and before he could alight a young lady appeared at the side of his cabin window shouting that he had cut her in. Asked if she was hurt, he alleged she said: “Mister, I have ruined a good pair of nylons and someone is going to pay for it”. He told her he did not think it was his fault that her brakes did not act. He was fined 20s.

1949 11 21

People passing over Magdalene Bridge this morning were surprised to see the usual colour of the River Cam had changed to a bright green. The discolouration extended from the bridge along the Backs of the colleges and beyond. It will be recalled that following a discolouration of the Cam last year – not then green – a public meeting of protest was called by the Federation of Anglers.

1950

1951 01 23

Cambridge town planning committee say there can be no justification for a spine relief road between Histon Road corner and Jesus Lane merely to preserve for a few years more buildings on the west side of Magdalene Street which, although of some architectural interest, are sub-standard from every other point of view. Pending demolition the commercial use of the buildings should be terminated, doing away with the necessity for vehicles to wait outside

1951 09 01 C

Sir – the use of a neon sign as an advertisement in a shop window in Magdalene Street, Cambridge has been forbidden, on the grounds that it would detract from the appearance of the building and be an incongruous feature in a pleasant riverside area. The building is itself rather a poor affair with plastered walls. If Cambridge depends on such as an attraction to visitors it is surely in a poor way. The paint on the railings of the bridge has faded to a poor green overlooking the discoloured waters in the river itself. Odd cigarette signs in red and yellow and in blue and white overhang the pavement. All might be regarded as incongruous and will presumably receive attention from the Ministry which objects to small neon signs – W.W. Davidson.

1952 01 14

Sir. Twenty-five years ago Magdalene College started a scheme which might have involved the widening of Magdalene Street and the removal of buildings opposite the college. But it does not now contemplate the completion of the scheme and is now strongly opposed to the widening of the street and the demolition of the buildings on the west side. The College would be strongly prejudiced if it should be divided by a street similar in character to the widened part of Bridge Street and would strongly object to such a change of character and loss of amenity in the neighbourhood – Henry Willink, Master.

1952 05 21

Just before six o'clock this morning Mr Frank Webster was in bed in a room above his shop in Magdalene Street, Cambridge when he heard a terrific bang. A six-tonner lorry loaded with 15 tons of wheat had crashed into the shop at the corner of Northampton Street, ploughed through the wall and ended up with its front wheels where the counter used to be. It had swerved to avoid another lorry which also crashed into the shop. Between them the vehicles made the place look as if it had received a direct hit from a bomb

1952 10 18

The County Development Plan public inquiry took a dramatic turn when Magdalene College announced it had decided to oppose proposals to widen Magdalene Street. The "dannish mind" did not often descend to take part in proceedings of this kind but this is a "bad plan and would be a disaster both to the University and the City of Cambridge", their counsel said. "You should not have motor traffic moving so fast that the lives of pedestrians and motorists are imperilled". Everyone wants Cambridge to remain a place in which the pedestrian, the cyclist and the motorist are more or less on an equal footing

1952 10 29

Cambridge City council has decided not to proceed with their proposal to widen Magdalene Street and reconstruct the great bridge. They had heard objections by the University and a statement on behalf of Magdalene College & believed that with mutual co-operation between the city and colleges some of the causes for the present traffic congestion could be removed. But if it became a choice of either the spine relief road or of widening Magdalene Street then they would choose the latter alternative

1952 11 05

Much of the congestion in the central area of Cambridge could be dealt with by providing car parks in the right places rather than the provision of extra circulatory routes the Chief Constable told the Development Plan inquiry. Closing of Magdalene Street would inevitably lead to an increased use of the Backs and the proposed spine relief road would not afford relief to traffic in the city centre. The

police had received many complaints concerning the amount of noise at Drummer Street bus station late at night. By moving it to New Square this objection would be alleviated

1952 11 06

"If Magdalene Street was closed several businesses would be affected between the Round Church and Northampton Street and the compensation would be very considerable", the Cambridge City Surveyor told the Development Plan inquiry. The council's policy on widening the road was laid down in 1925. When property was due for rebuilding the owners should set back the new building to some widened line. Boots had agreed to demolish their frontage and set it back when the time comes for the insurance office next door to be rebuilt.

1953 03 09

Police inquiries are being made to find the person responsible for blocking Magdalene Street in Cambridge with a length of iron fencing. It was stretched across the road, one end was chained to a lamp post and the other to a direction sign. There was a red lamp in the centre with a notice "Beware – foot and mouth disease". There was a diversion sign on the bridge and on Northampton Street traffic lights was a sign that warned, "Track closed".

1953 10 13

Magdalene Bridge weight, p3

1957 03 06

A hundred undergraduates who gathered on Magdalene Bridge to see the inaugural Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race run between the porters and bulldogs of three colleges were the victims of a joke. But not entirely. Diminutive, cheerful Horace Reed, who is 56 and works in Magdalene kitchens, appeared alone, aproned and carrying a frying pan. He ran the course, tossing a pancake from time to time. The event was arranged by the Pitt Club, who have inaugurated several successful hoaxes recently. 57 03 06

1958 09 27

Parking facilities in Cambridge were inadequate, said the Chief Constable. With more than 600 vehicles passing over Magdalene Bridge each hour, Park Street was a convenient site for a car park. Saxon Street park had been finished last week, work on King Street had not started and the Parkside car park was only a small one. Park Street was the one that should have first priority as a surface and multi-deck car park. But a thatched house in Clement Street built about 1700 should not be destroyed by 'this cement desert'. 58 09 27 b c d

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960

1962 07 05

County Council plans for a new "inner relief road" linking the Huntingdon Road-Castle Hill junction with Hyde Park Corner would cost £932,000 (£16.3m today). There would be a new bridge over the Cam at Jesus Green with an underpass at Four Lamps before the road continued to Parkside and Regent Street. This figure did not include the cost of acquiring additional land. It was needed to deal with traffic problems in Magdalene Street which is very narrow, an Inquiry was told. 62 07 05b

1964 07 02

Down Your Street article by Erica Dimock on Magdalene Street – 64 07 02-02e

1964 10 09

Controversial plans for an inner relief road have been deferred. The general line of the road had been known since 1950. It would be an alternative to Magdalene Bridge and give better access to Park

Street car park. But people along the proposed cannot sell their houses because of the uncertainty. If the Press had not reported council meetings they would not have known anything about it. 64 10 09f

1964 12 28

Sir – Magdalene College's plan to pull down a row of cottages, nos.8-18, in Northampton Street and replace them with a garden would alter its character and leave a gap in this distinctive part of old Cambridge. The row at present makes a beautiful curve, a fitting foil to the more splendid Cory House and no.13 Magdalene Street. In view of the college's highly successful treatment of Magdalene Street where the aspect has been retained, I hope they will be find some other solution short of complete demolition – Elizabeth Harland 64 12 28

1967 02 15

Councillors urge full check on Magdalene Bridge safety, oppose plans to widen Magdalene Street – 67 02 15a

1967 06 28

Magdalene Bridge closed to buses and heavy lorries for at least a year while repairs carried out – 67 06 28a

1969 11 04

Magdalene Bridge to be replaced with replaced with 'a simple modern design', says Ministry – 69 11 04

1969 11 26

Traffic jams in Magdalene Street due accident – photo – 69 11 26

1970

1970 11 04

Magdalene Bridge should be demolished and replaced say Ministry of Transport but opposition likely – photo of proposals – 70 11 04

1972 06 14

Cambridge's famous Magdalene Bridge is to be preserved, the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Peter Walker, has decided. His move follows last year's public inquiry into proposals by his Department to knock down and replace the 148-year-old bridge. Mr Walker has ruled that the bridge should be strengthened internally and that a temporary bridge should be provided alongside while work is going on, p18

1973 08 10

Magdalene Bridge, p23

1975 01 09

Magdalene Bridge, p7

1975 10 08

Magdalene Bridge, p9

1977 11 11

Magdalene Bridge, p1

1978 06 15

The 150-year-old Magdalene Bridge in Cambridge is in grave danger of collapsing, councillors were told. For the last 11 years there has been a three-ton vehicle restriction but sometimes the inter-continental 'juggernaut' lorries travelling through the city take a wrong turning and pass over the

bridge. Now the abutments, which support the bridge at both ends, are moving apart and if this continues it could eventually break its back. Plans were made to rebuild the bridge but environmentalists objected and at a public inquiry it was decided the bridge should be strengthened, retaining its present appearance. But Government engineers came up against insuperable technical problems in the use of the cast-iron parapets and have suggested cast-steel instead.

1978 10 13

The Varsity Handbook's pub guide includes a bitter attack on several Cambridge pubs. At The Horse and Groom, King Street it claims "the beer is foul, the bar dirty and the landlord unpleasant". The Pickerel, Magdalene Street, fares little better: "Foul place, selling foul beer and swamped by inhabitants of a certain nearby college". Whitbread pubs in particular come in for a bad time: "Why does Whitbread charge so much money for their freezing cold fizzy beer", it asks. But it likes the Baker's Arms, East Road - "friendly and near a fish and chip shop"

1979 11 02

County council engineers have devised a new method to strengthen the 150-year-old Magdalene Bridge in Cambridge without altering its appearance. If Government finances permit work will start in July, more than 13 years after the bridge was closed to buses and other heavy traffic because of its unsound condition. The rebuilding has been surrounded by controversy since cracks were detected in the under-structure. A public inquiry in 1971 agreed that the new bridge should resemble the old one as far as possible but a long wrangle developed over the appearance and complex legal issues were involved because it is an ancient structure.

1980

1981 01 27

Magdalene Bridge, p8

1981 10 20

Magdalene Bridge, p8

1981 11 20

Driving through Cambridge it seems a particularly malicious gremlin has got loose, armed with a pick-axe, and is busy making holes in any old bit of road he can find. For a start there is the Kite redevelopment which has reduced the amount of parking and led to major roadworks, then sewers have collapsed in Emmanuel Road, there is resurfacing in Coldham's Lane and Eastern Gas has moved into Tennis Court Road. There are temporary traffic lights in Silver Street and the continuing work on Magdalene Bridge adds to the disruption. 81 11 20b

1982 03 23

Traders are deserting Magdalene Street in the face of rent rises up to four times the present level, imposed by their college landlords. Several shops already have whitewashed windows and locked doors. Within a year, less than one-third of the original row could remain. Magdalene College says they want to keep it a specialist shopping area but have to get the market rent. 82 03 23 & 23a

1982 06 11

Three Cambridge restaurants have been recommended in a new guide to vegetarian cooking. But Renwick's Restaurant in Magdalene Street closed in March. Hobbs Pavilion comes in for the highest praise for its chilled cucumber soup while Nettles in St Edward's Passage serves a bulgar wheat pie that looks unappetising but tastes remarkable. 82 06 11a

1985 10 21

The old Otto Wehrle public clock is to be returned to its former position after a decade's absence. The 102-year-old clock was removed from the Cambridge Market Square façade when the Wehrle jewellers business closed after 125 years. Now it has been discovered in Lincolnshire by a Saffron

Walden dealer in ancient artefacts, Stephen McDermott. It is being restored by Rodney Firmin of Magdalene Street before being unveiled once more next spring 85 10 21

1987 10 20

Cambridge residents should be given the chance to air their views about old-fashioned lampposts that are being replaced as an economy measure, says Coun Rosensteil. The 'Richardson Candles' along Magdalene Street were designed nearly 40 years ago by Sir Albert Richardson, President of the Royal Fine Arts Commission to fit in with the street. But the County Council claims they are expensive to run and that spare parts are no longer available. However the modern steel columns have angered environmentalists who say they are unsuitable for such a sensitive area. 87 10 20